William C. Kashatus Papers, 1988-1995

National Baseball Hall of Fame Library

National Baseball Hall of Fame
25 Main Street
Cooperstown, NY 13326

This guide to the collection was prepared by Adam Berenbak, Steele Intern 2008 and reviewed by Claudette Scraford in August 2008.
Collection Number:
BA MSS 53
BL-4310.2000
BL-4309.2000

Title:
William C. Kashatus Papers

Inclusive Dates:
1988-1995

Extent:
1.32 linear feet (2 archival boxes; 10 audio cassettes)

Repository:
National Baseball Hall of Fame Library
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Abstract:
The William C. Kashatus Papers is a collection of correspondence, questionnaires, interviews and other research materials used by William Kashatus between 1988 and 1995 for the writing of “One-Armed Wonder: Pete Gray, Wartime Baseball, and the American Dream”. Included are proofs, manuscripts, audio-taped interviews and a photograph, all regarding Pete Gray and Eastern Pennsylvania history.

Acquisition Information:
This collection was a gift of William Kashatus in 2000.

Preferred Citation:

Access Restrictions:
By appointment during regular business hours, email research@baseballhall.org.

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History
William C. Kashatus was born in Eastern Pennsylvania and is a Phi Beta Kappa Graduate of Earlham College. He went on to earn an M.A. in History from Brown University and a Ph.D. in History Education from the University of
Pennsylvania. He taught history for fifteen years in a variety of schools in the New York and Philadelphia areas, including the William Penn Charter School and Abington Friends School, before becoming the Director of Educational and Public Programs at the Chester County Historical Society in West Chester, PA. Kashatus is the author of numerous books and articles on baseball in Eastern Pennsylvania as well as the histories of Philadelphia, William Penn and the Underground Railroad in Chester County. His interest in Pete Gray stems not only from his expertise on Eastern Pennsylvania history but a personal connection with the subject. When he was a young boy his father introduced the two, and Gray made a lasting impression upon the author. He set out to write a definitive biography of the man who had made such an impression on him, and spent seven years researching and interviewing in order to write “One-Armed Wonder: Pete Gray, Wartime Baseball, and the American Dream”, which was published in 1995. He donated the collection to the Hall of Fame in 2000.

Pete Gray was born Peter J. Wyshner Jr. in Nanticoke, PA, on March 6, 1915. His right arm was amputated just above the elbow when he was six following an accident in which he was thrown from a truck. His determination to become a professional baseball player was not deterred, and he developed a unique style of hitting and fielding that brought him success at the local level. After working his way up to winning the MVP of the Southern Association in 1943 with 63 stolen bases, he was signed by the St. Louis Browns for the 1945 season, going 1 for 2 against Hall of Famer Hal Newhouser in his April 17 debut. A fan favorite, Gray was none-the-less criticized as being simply a publicity stunt pulled out because of war-time shortages. In 77 games, Gray hit .218 with 13 RBI, 26 runs scored and a disappointing 5 stolen bases. He was released by the Browns when the season ended and played in the minor leagues until 1949, with a batting average of .308 in 472 games.

After leaving baseball, Gray moved back to Nanticoke and never left. He ran a pool hall, rented out rooms in his house and eked out a living while fighting alcohol and gambling addictions. During that time he turned down countless interviews and spent his time with his lifelong friends, shooting pool and playing golf. However, he did assist actor Keith Carradine in his role as Pete Gray in a made-for-television movie entitled, “A Winner Never Quits” and he threw out the first pitch on “Pete Gray Day”, at a 1978 Memphis Chicks game that honored his time with the club and his Southern Association record of 68 stolen bases. He died in 2002 at the age of 87.

Scope and Content
This collection consists of materials compiled between 1988 and 1995 in the preparation and writing of the biography “One-Armed Wonder: Pete Gray, Wartime Baseball, and the American Dream” by William C. Kashatus. This collection is organized in one series. Included are questionnaires and correspondence with individuals such as Bob Broeg, Bill Borst and Tim McCarver, regarding Pete Gray and the 1945 St. Louis Browns. There’s an
interview with Pete Gray conducted by Steve Svetovich, as well as correspondence between William Kashatus and various publishers regarding both his manuscripts and articles on Pete Gray. Clippings of articles used by Kashatus in his research, clippings of articles written by Kashatus on both Pete Gray and on Philadelphia Baseball and materials regarding the history of Pennsylvania’s Wyoming Valley.

Also in the collection are different proofs and manuscripts of the book “One-Armed Wonder: Pete Gray, Wartime Baseball, and the American Dream”, including the primary source documentation for an early draft entitled, “Beating the Odds: An Unauthorized Biography of the One-Armed Outfielder Pete Gray.”

System of Arrangement
The collection is organized in one series by subject matter.

Separations
A photograph “Glen Lyon A.C. Central League Champs-1953” with a roster on the reverse, has been separated to the Photograph Department.

Ten audio tapes of interviews have been separated to the Audio Department. See Content List below for complete inventory.

Controlled Access Terms
These records are indexed under the following terms in the National Baseball Hall of Fame’s Library catalog. Researchers wishing to find related materials may wish to search under these terms.

Corporate Names
Glen Lyon Condors
Hanover Lits
Memphis Chicks
Philadelphia Phillies
St. Louis Browns
Saturday Evening Post
Smithsonian Magazine

Personal Names
Broeg, Bob
Borst, Bill
Crosetti, Frank
Gray, Pete
Gutteridge, D.
Hollingsworth, Al
Kashatus, William
Kreevich, Mike
McCarver, Tim
Potter, Nelson
Shirley, Tex

Subjects
Baseball—Biography
Baseball--Interviews
Baseball—Missouri--St. Louis—History
Coal mines and mining—Pennsylvania—Wyoming Valley—History
Minor league baseball—Pennsylvania--History

Content List

Box 1
Folder 1 Program to the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society’s Board of Directors Meeting- (Keynote Speech by William Kahatus)

Folder 2 Correspondence regarding information about Pete Gray.

Folder 3 Correspondence with potential publishers of magazines.

Folder 4 Questionnaires sent through the mail.

Folder 5 Articles written by Kashatus
Book reviews

Folder 6 Articles regarding Gray and baseball in Pennsylvania.
Academic papers regarding history of coal mining and canals in Pennsylvania.
Map of Naticoke, PA.

Folder 7 Articles on Philadelphia baseball by William Kashatus.

Box 2
Folder 1 Proof from McFarland for “One Armed Wonder: Pete Gray, Wartime Baseball and the American Dream” with notes

Folder 2 Manuscript- “One Armed Wonder: Pete Gray, Wartime Baseball and the American Dream”

Folder 3 Manuscript- “One Armed Wonder: Pete Gray, Wartime Baseball and the American Dream”

Folder 4 Primary source documentation for “Beating the Odds: An Unauthorized Biography of the One Armed Outfielder Pete Gray”

Folder 5 Manuscript- “Beating the Odds: A Biography of the One Armed Baseball Player Pete Gray”
Box 3

Tape 1  CTA 0356-Radio Interviews with William Kashatus
         no date

Tape 2  CTA 0357-Radio Interviews with William Kashatus
         no date

Tape 3  CTA 0358-Interview with Levy Sokolowski (player with the Condors)
         4/14/91

Tape 4  CTA 0359-Interview with William Wyshner (Pete Gray’s nephew)
         1/15/93

Tape 5  CTA 0360-Interview with Andy Sweeney (played with the Condors)
         4/14/91

Tape 6  CTA 0361-Interview with Michael and Stephen Howryshko (boyhood
         friends of Pete Gray)  11/19/91

Tape 7  CTA 0362-Interview with Eddie Perluke (boyhood friend of Pete Gray)
         no date

Tape 8  CTA 0363-Interview with Tony Burgas (played with Hanover Lits)
         5/30/91

Tape 9  CTA 0364-Interview with Robert Janoson (Professor of History, Lozerne
         County Community College)  11/19/91

Tape 10 CTA 0365-Interview with John Barno (played with Hanover Lits)
          5/1/91
          -Interview with Edward Sincavage (played with Hanover Lits)
          5/1/91